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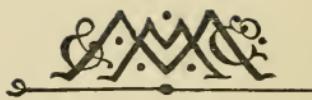
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LETTERS ON RELIGION



LETTERS TO HIS SON

ON

RELIGION

BY

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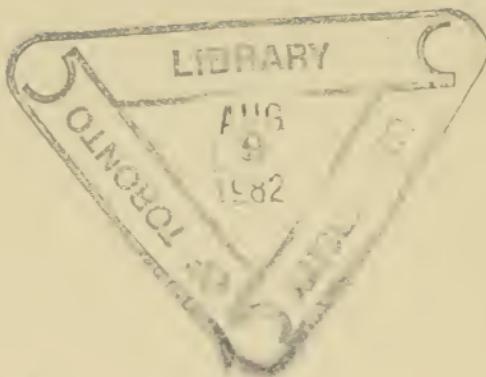
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I

15th February 1880.

I OFFERED to write to you frequently on religious and ecclesiastical subjects, and you said you would be glad to receive and read such letters. As my wish is to help you in what I know to be of all things the most important, but not to make it a burden to you, I do not expect answers to these letters, except when you have questions to ask, or otherwise feel prompted to pursue any subject farther than I may have done. But I hope you will not think it any loss of time to read what I write with

B

care, and with the same degree of thought which you would give to any other subject to which you paid serious attention.

I consider you now to be quite old enough to understand that the happiness, honour, and usefulness of our lives must depend on two things ; first, on our being masters of ourselves, and keeping all our animal inclinations and appetites under the government of moral principle and reason ; and secondly, on our endeavouring to fulfil the purposes for which we were brought into the world, and placed there in the particular station to which we are called, with a right sense of responsibility towards God and goodwill (what the Scripture calls love) to men. I do not, as you know, grudge you those exercises, amusements, and pleasures which are in themselves innocent, manly,

and sociable, provided they are indulged in with moderation, and in due subordination to intellectual and moral improvement. But I cannot conceal from you that I should be very jealous of them indeed, if I saw that, as you got older, they acquired more power over you, and did not fall naturally into their proper places, as the accessories and recreations, and not the business of life. The main business of your life, now, and for some time to come, is and must be to store your mind with necessary or useful knowledge; and of such knowledge, the most important beyond comparison is that which relates to the nature and objects of your life itself, and to God the Giver of it, in whose hands all the issues of it are, and to whom an account of the use you make of it will have to be rendered.

I wish to devote the rest of this letter to that one subject : the importance of a true knowledge of God, and the necessity of it as a foundation for such a life as it is my desire to see you lead.

It follows necessarily, from the mere belief that there is a Divine Author and Governor of the world, that all true light and wisdom has its source and centre in Him, and, therefore, that the knowledge of Him, so far as it is attainable by man, is the highest light and the truest wisdom to which man can attain ; and that by this alone we can be truly directed and governed, both in our endeavours to understand the world we live in, and in our ideas of what is practically right and good for ourselves and others, and of the proper way to pursue it. This is, no doubt, the explanation of what might perhaps, at first

sight, seem difficult—the way in which the Bible seems to place idolatry or falsehood in matters of religion in the forefront of sins, before those which relate to human conduct. False and unworthy conceptions of God corrupt, at their source, all the springs of human conduct, and turn them into wrong channels. In the ancient idolatries the process was to identify God with various (all of them partial and limited) forms of the manifestation of His power in Nature; and then to invest those natural powers, thus made the representatives and the measure of their author, with an imaginary personality, of which the elements were human, without human morality. The result was every sort of odious moral degradation, and that in the name of religion. The superstitions of savages have the same effects. And

even among those who ought to have a true knowledge of God it is frightful to see how easily false conceptions of His laws and His will lead to practical wickedness ; as, for example, the crimes of persecution, and all sorts of uncharitableness towards those who have the misfortune (as we suppose) to possess less light, or to be less faithful to it, than ourselves. As knowledge must precede and regulate action in all things, so it is as to the governing principles of life : if we believe what is false to be true, our action will be on false lines ; and if this is the case in the region of the lower, it must be at least as much so in that of the highest Truth. “ If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.” In this way we see the force of St. John’s declaration concerning our Lord: “ That was the true

Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And there is in such a case but little difference between ignorance, arising not from the necessary limits of our knowledge, but from carelessness, worldliness, and neglect, and the substitution of falsehood for truth. If the soul of man does not seek after the highest truth to govern it, if (as St. Paul says, Romans i.) he "does not like to retain God in his knowledge," it is impossible that he should not set up some lower rule and principle as the governing power of his life instead of God, pleasure, it may be, or covetousness, which (no doubt for that reason) St. Paul calls idolatry. These false illusions, which never fulfil their promise, and degrade men to the level of beasts or below it, or self-worship and intellectual pride

(which, if less degrading, is quite as false) become his gods. If the soul is empty it will not be long before devils come and lodge in it.

To all this is to be added that God is not only the source of light to our souls; He is “our Father” also. You, who are so loving a son to your earthly parents, need not that I should magnify to you the Parental and Filial relation, or the loss which it must be to a son to reject or not care about the Highest Parental Love.

II

22nd February 1880.

In my last letter I spoke of the supreme importance of a true knowledge of God. In this I intend to speak of the means by which that knowledge is attainable by us.

There are four main sources of this knowledge: of which two, (1) the outward light from the sensible universe which surrounds us, and of which we form part, and (2) the inward light from the constitution of our own minds and souls, belong to the province of what is commonly called Natural Religion. The other two, (3) Scripture, and (4) the institution and ordinances of the Church (in which I include Prayer and the Sacraments) belong to what is commonly distinguished as Revealed Religion. But in this as in many other things there is danger of error from separating things which ought to be regarded not as separate, but as combined. What God makes known to us by His works, or by His voice in our own souls, is as truly *Revelation* (so far as it conveys a true knowledge of Him) as anything

written under His inspiration, or appointed by His special ordinance. And it has been a fruitful source of error in religion to set up one or more of these sources of Divine knowledge against the others, instead of harmonising and recognising the mutual relation of them all. Heathen idolatry arose mainly out of a one-sided reliance upon man's power to interpret God by the Outward Light, the manifestation of Him in Nature, without due regard to the Inward Light of Reason and the Moral Sense, and without keeping in mind the primitive knowledge which, to the earlier ages of men, was what Scripture and the Church, etc. are to us. In modern times the Quakers and Rationalising Protestants have made the Inward Light their sole and infallible rule, to the disparagement of the other means; and

the consequence, with many of them, has been to obscure that Light itself. With some Protestants the recoil from superstition and exaggerated claims of Church authority has expressed itself in the well-known dogma of Chillingworth, that “the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.” This one-sided and exclusive recognition of the Bible, as if it were the *only* source of religious knowledge, is by no means confirmed by the Bible itself; and it has tended greatly towards division and variety of doctrine in the Church, and to substitute an intellectual and emotional for a practical and historical conception of the Christian religion. On the other hand, the merely ecclesiastical view, which exalts the authority of the Church or of Popes, above all other sources of knowledge, and refuses to private reason

any place in the interpretation of Scripture, has been the parent of an infinite amount of formalism, superstition, and corruption, and, by the unavoidable reaction from it, has contributed much to unsettle the minds of many men on the whole subject of religion. It is an almost universal law that the one-sided and exclusive assertion of particular truths, to the neglect or disparagement of others, results in falsehood. Pure and unmixed falsehoods would never be believed; perhaps it might even be impossible for the human mind, constituted as it is, to believe them, if they did not come with some semblance of truth or with some element of truth plausibly presented in them. But, inasmuch as all Truth is really One, a particular truth may become a falsehood, when it is set up in opposition to, and

made to exclude or contradict some other truth. In one respect there is something comforting in this; for the fact that those who are most in error may have been misled by following fragments of truth, disjointed from their proper relation to other truths, may assist us to form charitable views of such persons. But, as far as we ourselves are concerned, our own search for Truth ought to be loyal and comprehensive, taking in all light, from all its sources, and not willingly neglecting or undervaluing any. And we cannot be too much upon our guard against any dogmas or theories, by which the access of Divine light to our souls, from any of its real sources, may be obscured. Another thing, against which we should also be on our guard, is the error of either identifying our own fallible inter-

pretations of the light accessible to us from any of these sources with the light itself, or undervaluing any source of light, as if it could safely be disregarded, because we have not the power of infallibly interpreting it.

I said just now that the saying of Chillingworth, about the *Bible only*, was not confirmed by the Bible itself; and I shall show you that the Bible very distinctly recognises both the outward and the inward lights of Natural Religion, as true and real revelations of God to man. As to the Outward Light, the 19th Psalm says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work." The book of Job is full of appeals to the same source of light. St. Paul, in that very important first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, says that unrighteous men

everywhere will be judged, not as ignorant of truth, but as “*holding* the truth” in unrighteousness; “because that which may be known of God is manifest in (or *to*) them: for God has shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” And, with respect to the Inward Light, of Reason and the Moral Sense, we are, in the first place, told at the beginning of Genesis that man was created “in the image,” or “likeness,” of God,—clearly not as to his animal, but as to his spiritual nature; a statement which at once suggests the conclusion that we may know something at least of Him and His attributes, by the image or likeness of

Himself which He has impressed upon our own souls; and St. Paul, in some passages to which I will refer when I return to this subject in another letter (Acts xvii. 28, 29; and Romans ii. 14, 15), refers to, and insists upon, the possession of this Inward Light by the Gentile world.

III

29th February 1880.

I was stopped at the end of my last letter while indicating some of the more prominent recognitions in Scripture of sources of Divine Light, other than itself. St. Paul, when speaking to the Athenian philosophers from the Areopagus, referred to the Inward Light which man has by nature, as created in the image of God. He speaks of it as part of the Creator's purpose that men should

"seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." And then, appealing to the words of "certain of their own poets" (Cleanthes and Aratus), "For we are also His offspring," he adds; "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts xvii.). And in the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans he says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the

meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." With respect to the institution and ordinances of the Church it is, for the present, sufficient to refer to one testimony only; that in which St. Paul, writing to Timothy (1 Tim. iii.), calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth —*στύλος καὶ ἐδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας*"; a very remarkable expression, to which I shall have occasion, when I speak more particularly of the Church, to advert again.

It will reward our pains to endeavour to see, more particularly, what we really may learn from each of these sources of light; what the limits are of each, standing alone, and how needful and instructive is the supplement, or development, which each of them receives from the others. It will be convenient, in point of order, first to consider the Outward Light, remembering, of course,

that it could not reach us at all except by the power which that part of the Inward Light which we call "Reason" gives, of receiving into the mind the impressions conveyed through the bodily senses, and forming intelligent judgments concerning them. When we have obtained some conception of what by this aid may be learnt from the Outward Light and of the questions which it raises but does not itself solve, it will then be well to see what enlargement and expansion this conception naturally receives, when the information coming from the moral part of the Inward Light is combined with it; and again, when it is regarded in the Light derivable from Scripture. The evidence of the truth of religion in all its parts is of the kind called "cumulative"; that is, it is made up of a number of different (but all of

them converging) lines of truth, of which some, when separately considered, may seem imperfect or incomplete, but which, when brought together, are found so to bear upon and support each other as to be in their combined effect impregnable.

Even without aid from any other sort of revelation there is, in the sensible universe around us, that which leads irresistibly to a knowledge of those attributes of God which we call Omnipotence, Omniscience or Supreme Wisdom, Omnipresence, Incomprehensibility, Infinity, and Eternity, without beginning or end. And it is very noteworthy that these ideas, so vast and transcendent as to baffle human comprehension, and dazzle, so to say, the eyes of the mind when it attempts to dwell upon them, are, nevertheless, impressions which result equally from the unscientific and

the scientific observation of nature. Omnipotence is the sum of all the powers and forces which are manifested in the universe, by which everything which exists has been produced and is governed,—from the suns and stars which we see in the heavens, and the boundless space which contains them, to the smallest grain of dust or sand, and the myriads of creatures so small as to be seen only by the microscope, or not seen at all: which has determined the orbits of all the heavenly bodies, and keeps them all in their courses, and is continually working by those agencies which we call physical, chemical, mechanical, and vital, all around and within us. These manifestations give us a natural impression of power without limit; and, as we cannot conceive of any place where this power is not, the

idea of Omnipresence follows, as a corollary from it; and the investigations and conclusions of natural philosophers which have led them to believe in the “correlation” or interchangeability of all natural forces, and to suggest as probable a pervading uniformity in the original natural conditions of all matter, concur with the religious instinct in ascribing an essential unity to this Power and Presence. The ideas of Infinity as to Space and Incomprehensibility (*i.e.* immeasurableness) are perceived to be necessary by the natural reason; and even the Roman Epicurean poet, Lucretius, was able to demonstrate them, because there can be no bond or limit of that beyond which there is nothing else existing. Infinity as to time or Eternity is also an idea, which reason irresistibly arrives at, from

its inability to conceive how anything could have ever come into existence, if there ever was nothing ; and from the observation that, though all things sensible may be decomposed as to their elements, and change their combinations and forms, no part of those elements is ever lost or destroyed. Omniscience or perfect wisdom is not less naturally discerned, from the fact that law and order pervade all this infinite space, as far as our faculties can discern, from the greatest to the smallest things ; from the wonderful adaptation of means to ends observable (as Paley has pointed out with especial reference to the human body) throughout the whole life and organisation of animated beings, and the whole natural economy of all things subservient to the support of their life and to their other needs ; and (as the

Duke of Argyll in his *Reign of Law* has shown) in the instincts of all the inferior creatures, which if not directed by any conscious reason or intelligence in those creatures themselves, are so much the more wonderful proofs of a Supreme Reason and Intelligence in the Power which created them.

IV

7th March 1880.

There is a form of opinion called "Pantheism," by which some, stopping short at the point to which we were brought by my last letter, and shutting their eyes to all other Light, have practically denied to the Outward Light itself any religious significance; and it may be doubtful whether that opinion is not virtually held even by those philosophers whose language, being merely

negative, leads others to describe their views in mere terms of negation. That *something* does exist, with the wonderful and mysterious attributes spoken of in my last letter, is undeniable ; and the only possible question (the light of nature alone being regarded) must be, whether we are to ascribe all these attributes to the sensible or material universe itself, or to a Being who is to be acknowledged as the Author and Ruler of that universe. Pantheism (*i.e.* the opinion which identifies the whole material universe with God and acknowledges no God except this universe, or aggregate of sensible things) asserts the former of these alternatives. In this, I think, we have a strong example of the superiority of the common sense of mankind at large over the refinements of philosophers. The knowledge of truth on

those subjects which touch the whole government of life is as necessary for ordinary men as for philosophers; and, unless man were the only creature whose general intelligence was without a proportionate adjustment to his wants, it might be safely concluded that the faculty of a true discernment in these matters would not be a result of advanced science in a few, but would belong to, or be within the reach of, all who did not make unnecessary difficulties about it for themselves. Such difficulties may be created in men of all sorts by a moral antipathy to the light; and in men of high intellectual attainments by intellectual pride and self-confidence, which trusts to nothing but itself, and so becomes entangled in its own sophisms. Our Lord thanked His Father, that He "had hid these things

from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes." "God" (says St. Paul) "has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." "In the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God" (I Cor. i.), and "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. i.).

Now on this subject of Pantheism as opposed to Theism I think the appeal may very safely be made to the common sense of mankind. If the attributes which we call Divine were to be ascribed to the material universe as a whole, they must, on the same principle, be ascribed to every part of it. But the common sense of mankind echoes, as to this, the declarations of Scripture. It says, indeed, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up

into Heaven, Thou art there ; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, Thou art there" (Psalm cxxxix.). But the presence which it so recognises is not localised in any particles of matter or portions of space ; "The Lord is not in the wind," nor in "the earthquake," nor "in the fire" (I Kings xix.). "Where shall wisdom be found ? and where is the place of understanding ? The depth saith, It is not in me ; and the sea saith, It is not with me" (Job xxviii.). Omnipotence cannot be ascribed to stocks and stones or other aggregates of material particles over which even man can exert power. Omnipresence, Infinity, Incomprehensibleness are ideas opposed to the conditions of all such material substances ; which are finite, and contained within definite bounds of space. Change,

decay, and death, to which all animated natures in the material world are subject, and the instability and variability of the combinations of inorganic matter, are very remote from any rational conception of the eternal. And to represent all dead, inert, inorganic matter as Supremely Intelligent is manifestly absurd. Whatever else, therefore, is true, Pantheism cannot be.

So far as to Outward Light alone without any aid from the inward beyond the powers of perception and intelligent judgment. Now let us consider what more the Inward Light adds to it. It adds the ideas of Personality, of Will, and of Moral Goodness, with its opposite, Moral Evil. The two former are derived from the consciousness of the unity and individuality of that Intelligent Being which each man calls “himself,” and of

the faculty of volition (so as to determine action) which each man knows himself to possess. The third is an intuition of the critical faculty on which depend the notions of right and wrong and all our moral judgments. These ideas, when compared with those derived from the Outward Light, reveal to us Will as the Law of Power; Personality as the seat of rational Intelligence; and Goodness as the perfection of an intelligent nature. How can the attributes of Absolute Power and Supreme Wisdom be without Personality and Will? How can that perfection, to which all the Divine attributes testify, be without perfect goodness? We obtain, therefore, in this manner, and to this extent from the Outward and the Inward Light combined, a revelation of God. But this revelation, if we had nothing more,

would be subject to many questions and many perplexities ; especially those which arise out of the presence of evil in ourselves and in the world. It is, therefore, no more than the belief in an Author of our Being, All-powerful and All-good, would make probable, that this need of still further light should be in some way supplied.

V

14th March 1880.

In my last letter I spoke of the perception by the Inward Light of the ideas of moral good and evil. This, which we call the Moral Sense, is to our spiritual nature what the eye is to the body. It places us, on the spiritual side, in the same kind of necessary relation with truths and principles not cognisable by the physical sense (but nevertheless under-

stood to be real and certain), as we are placed in by the physical sense with those which are so cognisable. And it asserts the supremacy to us, at all events, of the truths with which it is conversant.

The moral sense is not only like the intellect, receptive and critical of the impressions made upon it by its proper subject-matter, but it enters into our personal consciousness and is imperative; *i.e.* it convinces us of duty or of obligation. It presupposes a law, not of our own making, to which we owe obedience, and for opposition to which we shall be in some way answerable; it passes judgment upon us for all wilful breaches of that law, making us at once witnesses against and judges of ourselves; and by the same rate of judgment we judge others also. This judicial faculty, which we call “con-

science," thus becomes, both in its direct action as to ourselves, and in its reflex or indirect action as to others, the regulating principle of our lives. Being implanted in us from our birth by the Author of our Being it must be (if anything in the world is) His voice within us; the law which it enforces must be His law; its judgments must be His judgments, and the Power which gives effect to them His. The morality which it teaches us must be the Image and Reflection of His Nature. It is, therefore, most important that we should have as correct a knowledge as possible of the subject-matter, and of the manner, of the operations of this moral sense, and that we should not confound it with anything from which it is really distinct.

It is concerned, not with opinion or speculation on any abstract truths, but

with the motives of action, and the voluntary actions resulting from them. It absolves, or at least excuses, mistakes and errors originating in involuntary ignorance; and it condemns every action, and every *προαιρεσις* (to use Aristotle's word, signifying an intelligent determination of the will) in which the prevailing will is opposed to conscience. It is to this prevalence of an evil will over what we know to be right, that we apply the words "wickedness," "guilt," and "sin"; all which derive their essential meaning from the moral sense, and express something wholly different from "wrong" in the sense of mere error. The whole of this system of thought and language bears witness to the existence of an element in man's nature unlike and incommensurable with all the elements of all the inferior

natures of which we have any knowledge; while, on the other hand, the bodily constitution of man is, as plainly, like to and commensurable with that of brute creatures. Those creatures have (though in a lower degree) something resembling even the intellectual faculty in man; but the moral sense differs from anything which we can perceive in them, not only in degree, but in kind. In man himself reason is obscured when the moral sense is deficient; so that the inability to distinguish between right and wrong has become, among ourselves, a critical test of insanity.

Conscience, in all its operations, presupposes (as I have said) a law; and, of course, a law which is *known*. But it is not the office of conscience by itself to give that knowledge. It can, and does, recognise those primary rudiments

of it which result from our physical constitution, and from our necessary or natural relations to other men ; and it enables us to test, by reference to them, all ethical codes or systems which may be otherwise presented to us. But it does not itself construct any such codes or systems. The primary moral duty of self-government, by keeping appetite and passion in subjection to reason, may properly be said to result from our physical constitution ; it being proved by universal experience that this is necessary to prevent the higher faculties being overpowered by the lower, and the body itself becoming diseased, exhausted, enfeebled, and made un-serviceable for its proper uses. The other primary moral duties spring out of our necessary relations to other men. Of these the first and most invariable

is the filial ; of which the necessary and invariable condition is absolute dependence on, and subjection to, others, in the first stage of our lives. The law of filial love and that of subordination and obedience to legitimate authority thus come naturally home to us from the first dawn of consciousness and reason. As we grow up we are brought, in the course of nature, into relations with, first others of our own family circle besides our parents, and afterwards strangers ; and, from the consciousness of wrong done to ourselves by cruelty, unkindness, and injustice we learn that to behave cruelly, unkindly, or unjustly towards others would be wrong and immoral on our part. The same “ Royal Law ” of doing to others as we would be done by also teaches us the duty of truth. And these five elementary principles, of self-

government, obedience to legitimate authority, love, justice, and truth, lie at the root and foundation of all morality.

VI

21st March 1880.

It may be useful before going farther to illustrate what has been already said, by some instances of the extent to which moral and spiritual illumination was, in fact, attained by good and wise men in the Gentile world, who made the best use which they could of those natural sources of it, which alone were accessible to them. I will take three examples; one from Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher, who lived at Athens about 300 years before Christ; one from the *Republic* of Plato (about 100 years earlier) who puts the words which I shall quote into the mouth of Socrates; and the

third from Juvenal, writing at Rome about 120 years after Christ, but without any knowledge of Christian doctrine.

Cleanthes (in a hymn to Jupiter) prayed for guidance and light to the "Sovereign Ruler of Nature, governing all things by Law"; "for we" (he said) "are Thy offspring, alone of all living creatures created in Thy sole image. Obedient to Thee is all this revolving universe which surrounds the earth; it willingly accepts Thy control; nor is anything done without Thee in earth, or sky, or sea, except the wicked deeds of men of perverted mind. Thou knowest how to set bounds to excess, to bring order out of disorder, and to reconcile enmity to Thy Love. Thou unitest all things, both good and evil, in one by the bond of Eternal Reason; which the wicked, to their misery, fly

from and forsake, longing ever to become possessors of good things, yet shutting their eyes and ears to the universal Law, by obedience to which they might attain both wisdom and happiness."

Socrates, according to Plato, conceived thus of the nature and the reward of Righteousness in man (*Rep.* book x. ; Jowett's *Transl.* p. 510)¹ :—

" This must be our notion of the just man ; that, even when he is in poverty or sickness, or in any other seeming misfortune, all things will in the end work together for good to him in life and death : for the Gods have a care of any one, whose desire is to become just (*ὅστις προαιρεῖσθαι ἐθέλει δίκαιος γίγνεσθαι*), and to be like God, as far as man can attain the Divine likeness, by

¹ i.e. in the second edition (1875), vol. iii. ; in the paging of Stephanus, 613 A.

the pursuit of virtue." Compare this with St. Paul's words in Romans viii. 28, 38, 39: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. . . . For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The other passage (from the 13th Satire of Juvenal) lays down the same high law of morality which we find in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 22, 28), and in Matt. xv. 19. I quote from Gifford's translation (all but the last couplet):—

Guilt still alarms, and conscience, ne'er asleep,
Wounds with incessant strokes, not loud but deep,
While the vexed mind, her own tormentor, plies

A scorpion scourge, unmarked by human eyes.

(*Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum.*)

Trust me, no tortures which the poets feign
Can match the fierce, th' unutterable pain,
He feels, who night and day, devoid of rest,
Carries his own accuser in his breast.

(“*Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.*”)
Such wrath pursues each wicked purpose still ;
For Heaven can judge the Deed, while 'tis but Will.

(“*Has patitur pœnas peccandi sola voluntas.*

Nam, scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,
Facti crimen habet.”)

But, although some few men could rise to such heights as these, by those lights only which belong to what we call “Natural Religion,” the general tendency of mankind, when left to these alone, has been to go back from lower rather than advance towards higher degrees of moral and spiritual knowledge. It is matter, not of dogma, but of experience, that there is present in every man's nature (in varying degrees

of power) a perverse and contradictory element which takes the wrong side, and tends to corrupt the will, when the solicitations of sense are at variance with the dictates of right reason and conscience. This is too apt to prevail; and, when it prevails, it leads to the formation of evil habits which gain strength by repetition and indulgence; and thus, under the multiplying influences of time and of example, opinion and practice become debased in individuals, communities, and nations. And when the unaided intellect endeavours to penetrate the mystery which surrounds and lies behind all physical phenomena it finds itself baffled. The truths which the voice of Nature proclaim are inarticulate, and want definition and interpretation. The attempt to define, demonstrate, or

analyse them by experimental or logical methods fails of success ; and minds, which insist on experiment and logic as the only means of arriving at any true knowledge, are landed, by these processes, in perplexity, doubt, and disbelief. Thus, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. ii. 14), “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness to him ; because they are spiritually discerned.” This downward course, both of the Will and of the Intellect, when the natural light alone is relied on, is in itself,* as it seems to me, strong evidence that further information as to moral and spiritual truths is a want of our nature, a necessary supplement required by, and implied in, the natural light itself, without which the design and purpose discoverable from

the moral nature of man and his relations to the rest of the universe would not be adequately fulfilled. In other words, the Natural Light, having those limits which we find it to have, and raising those questions which we find it to raise without solving them, prepares us to believe and leads us to expect, that some further information and aid will, in other ways, be Divinely given so as to enable us to resist and counteract these downward tendencies. The belief of Christians is that such further information has, in fact, been given, and is contained in the Holy Scriptures; and that Divine aid has also been, and is continually, given, in other ways, which the Scriptures disclose. This it is, which makes the study of the Bible of so much more importance to us than any other study in the world.

VII

Easter Eve 1880.

When St. Paul supposed (1 Cor. xv.) the case of some one who might require, as a condition of belief in the doctrine of the Resurrection, that the manner of it should be explained to him, he rebuked the demand as "foolish," and thought it enough to show, by analogies from the natural world, that there might be a real continuity between states of existence wonderfully different from each other. Some persons make the same kind of demand as to the doctrine of special Divine revelations; and our Saviour's own words (John iii.), "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or

whither it goeth" (with respect to one particular operation of the Holy Spirit) indicate that to this demand, also, the same kind of answer may properly be given. When men are able perfectly to explain the origin, causes, laws, and operations of nature it will be time enough to lay down the proposition that nothing is to be believed which cannot be fully explained. In the meantime, the natural light will carry us some way towards the conception of that which is beyond it, and may be a ladder, by which we shall be helped to rise higher. If, for convenience of phrase we call what is higher "supernatural," we do not mean by that form of expression that the "natural" and "supernatural" are really two different modes or systems of Being; both ideas centre in God, whom we believe to be alike the

Author of all forms and modes of Being ; nor can we conceive anything more essentially “supernatural” than the origination of “Nature”; which word we practically use to describe that system of things, of which our senses inform us, or which is directly the subject of our consciousness. It has been already seen that, to the minds of those who do not start with the assumptions of unbelief, the idea of special Divine revelation commends itself, not as possible only, but as probable ; and any questions or difficulties, which may be suggested as to the manner of it, may be answered as far as is needful for the confirmation of faith.

It is certainly not more difficult to believe that God can impress upon the mind of man, through all or any of the faculties by which it is enabled to receive

intelligence, any knowledge which it is His will to impart, than to believe that God created the mind itself with those faculties. If He is present everywhere ; if He “maintains all things by the word of his power” ; if He is the Author of all the laws of the universe, ruling and over-ruling all events, and appointing the course of all things by His providence, man cannot be exempted from His presence, power, government, and providential care ; and, all natural things, influences, and powers being his instruments and ministers, it seems manifest that He can use them all as true and real means of communication between Himself and man. What is the gift of reason itself, and the cognate gift of speech, but a Divine communication on which all man’s intelligence is founded ? The whole elements of speech are, in

reality, made up of figures, pictures, and images derived from the objects of sensation; and yet we find them well adapted and sufficient to convey to our minds a true, trustworthy, and (where accuracy is necessary) even an exact and scientific knowledge of abstract (*e.g.* mathematical) truths, and of intellectual and moral conceptions. The moral sense which enables us to form moral conceptions at all is certainly not less a Divine communication. And the thought comes naturally to men that (in Shakespeare's words) "there's a Divinity which shapes" the more rare and excellent products of these gifts, and the impressions conveyed by them to the soul from outward things, even short of anything to which we should apply the word "supernatural." When the Scripture represents extraordinary wisdom,

even concerning earthly things (as in the case of Solomon) as a special gift of God, it does but confirm an instinctive sentiment of humanity. The Scripture goes still farther in this doctrine (if I may so call it) of inspiration, as applied to all the more excellent achievements of human reason. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri . . . , and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship" (Exodus xxxi.). This, you see, applies to works of art and handicraft. We hardly can need Scripture warrant to

assume as much of poetry, the most lasting and far-reaching storehouse of the higher intuitions of the most gifted men, in which also are preserved the most interesting and instructive of the older traditions of humanity. “The poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven” (*Shakespeare, Midsummer Night’s Dream*). Of Scripture itself a very large part is poetry. It was said by Pindar, of some classical legends, that they were φωνᾶντα συνέτοισιν· ἐς δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρμηνέων χατίζει—“full of meaning to the wise, but needing an interpreter to men in general.” And it is certain that the common sights and sounds which are all around us are often made, as if by some mysterious power giving them a special interpretation, to serve the purposes of special impressions upon

the minds or hearts of particular men. To the guilty, for example, as is said (with much more enlargement) in the context of that passage in the 13th Satire of Juvenal, which I quoted in my last letter :—

Hi sunt qui trepidant, et ad omnia fulgura pallent,
Quum tonat ; exanimis primo quoque murmure cœli.

Nor do such intimations come in such ways to the guilty only. They often come in the way of warning, sometimes of encouragement. If it be said that they are imaginations, so they are ; but their effects are realities, and imagination is a real power. “Non sine Numine.”

VIII

4th April 1880.

To what was said of imagination in my last letter this should be added, that it

is capable of physical as well as mental excitements. A familiar instance is that of dreams, in which various combinations of ideas present themselves, sometimes with much vividness and coherence, while the active powers are in suspense. The retina of the eye in persons not asleep is also said to be capable, under certain conditions, of receiving abnormal impressions, as if objects not presented to it in the ordinary way of nature were actually seen; and this has been regarded by men of science (as you may see, among other books, in Sir Walter Scott's *Demonology*, etc.) as a sufficient physical cause for some extraordinary apparitions. The ear is probably capable of like abnormal impressions of vocal sounds. From such facts of human experience as these the transition to special Divine

revelations is not difficult to those who believe in a moral and providential government of the world.

In the Bible special revelations are represented as having been made to men in several different ways. Some of them (*e.g.* the use of lots, and "Urim and Thummim") by the employment of instrumental means under the Jewish Theocracy to obtain Divine guidance upon particular occasions. Others, for communications of more general and permanent importance; as (1) inward impulse or inspiration; (2) dreams; (3) visions, either in trance or otherwise; and (4) articulate voices. Underlying and connecting all these is the general doctrine of Divine and spiritual influence upon man, which is of the very essence of the scriptural idea of religion, and of which the Bible from beginning to end is full.

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity is revealed to us (as to His Divine nature, and His personal attributes in the Divine economy) under the title of *ό λόγος*, the Greek word signifying both “reason” and “speech.” We are told that He is the “Light of men”; the “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”; “the Light of the world.” “No man,” it is said (John i. 18), “has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (*ἐξηγήσατο*). His special work as the Saviour of men from sin and its effects is the main subject of the whole Bible.

The Third Person of the same Holy Trinity is (evidently on the same principle of the approximate conveyance to our minds of truths not absolutely com-

prehensible by us, through symbols derived from things within our observation and experience) revealed to us under the title of *πνεῦμα* (with the additions *ἄγιον* and *τοῦ θεοῦ*): that Greek word, and its Latin equivalent *spiritus*, meaning breath of air, that breath of air by the infusion of which into his body man “became a living soul”; which constitutes the atmosphere surrounding the whole globe we inhabit; and on which the life of all organised beings on the surface of that globe depends. By the same word we distinguish that part or principle of our own nature in which we feel our consciousness, personality, intelligence, and moral sense to reside; and by the adjective derived from it we describe the whole class of ideas which arises out of the distinction between these and what we call material things.

To this Divine Person, the Holy Spirit of God, the Scripture ascribes an active and energetic presence in the souls of those men who submit themselves to His government. Our Lord's own teaching (John iii.) is that they are "re-generated (*i.e.* adopted into the earthly family of the Heavenly Father, as by the natural birth they were brought into that of their natural parents) by "the Spirit": of whom also our Lord elsewhere (John xiv. 17; xv. 26; xvi. 13) speaks as "the Spirit of Truth," sent to His disciples as an "Advocate or Helper" (mistranslated "comforter,") to "guide" them into all truth. He is (Romans viii.) the "Spirit of adoption"; by whom men are enabled to enter into, and realise their filial relation towards God. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of

God." To His operation all Christian gifts, graces, and virtues, both ordinary and extraordinary, are attributed. St. Paul has a whole chapter (1 Cor. xii.) upon this subject, beginning $\pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\imath}$ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν. Even the simple profession of belief in Jesus Christ as "the Lord" (sincere, he of course assumes it to be) is, he says, impossible "but by the Holy Ghost." And he goes on to speak of the various forms and degrees of manifestations of the power of "that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will"; ascending up from such gifts (attainable by, if not necessary to, ordinary Christians) as "the word of wisdom," "the word of knowledge and faith," to those which were extraordinary and, as we are accustomed to say, supernatural.

Christians acknowledge the Scriptures as "the Word of God" and habitually speak of them as "inspired." Less cannot be meant by this, than that what, in those books, is recorded as Divine revelation really is so, and that the substance of the information contained in them concerning spiritual things is true, and to be certainly believed. But it is not inconsistent with that belief, that, as to much of the form and incidental matter of those books, the human faculties of the men who wrote them may have been left free. Men, whom God makes His ministers or messengers, do not therefore cease to be men. And, looking at the same point from the side, not of those who deliver, but of those who receive the message, the general law of moral probation might lead us to expect that some re-

sponsible exercise of the human faculties of attention, inquiry, and discernment might be required for the right apprehension and use of this (as it is of every other) source of light and knowledge. The canonical authority of each book of Scripture is not established by a special and personal revelation to each individual Christian, but by the historical testimony of its reception from the earliest ages of the Church. The text of the ancient manuscripts of the Scriptures has (like that of other ancient books) various readings in different copies, affecting the form and letter of a great number of passages ; and in many cases the choice between these is, and always must remain, a matter of fallible human criticism. The language in which those books are written is not (at least in the Gospels) that used by the

Divine and human persons whose words and actions are recorded; and, to those who compare carefully the different narratives of the same discourses and events (*e.g.* by the Evangelists), differences in the structure, order, method, arrangement, and particulars of the narrative, are at once apparent. Even in trustworthy, uninspired books, the credit of the general text and belief in the substance of the history is not affected by such variations. Why, then, should they be difficulties in the Scriptures?

IX

11th April 1880.

Pursuing the subject of the special revelation (or rather revelations) from God to man, contained in the Holy Scriptures, we should observe first, of

what the Scriptures consist ; and secondly, how they themselves represent their own claim to authority.

The Old Testament (which has the double and independent testimony to its authenticity of both Jews and Christians) consists : (1) of seventeen historical books, written at many different times, and covering the whole tract of time from the beginning of the human race to the earlier Persian kings of the dynasty of Darius Hystaspes ; (2) five books of devotional and philosophical poetry, written at intervals during the space of about 1000 years ending with the dedication of the second temple, a little less than 500 years before Christ ; and (3) sixteen other books, also in the main poetical, bearing the names of as many prophets, which are supposed to range over the 500 years or thereabouts, preceding the

fourth century before Christ. Most of these books are in the Hebrew language, a few of the later are in Chaldee or the dialect of Babylon ; and one (the book of Daniel) is partly in Hebrew and partly in Chaldee. The historical books contain two kinds of matter : (1) that which is like the matter of other human histories, concerning such events and occurrences in the lives of individual men, or in the affairs of families, tribes, or nations, as might take place and be recorded according to the ordinary course of human experience ; and (2) that which on the face of the books claims to be, or from the nature of the case (if true) must have been, matter of special revelation. In all but four of the historical books (the exceptions being Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther) both these kinds of matter are

found. The second occupies a large proportion of the whole contents of the first five books, called the Pentateuch. The account, with which it opens, of the work of Creation could not possibly, from the nature of the case, be the subject of human observation and experience; and many special revelations are recorded as made directly by God, to Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac; to Lot by the ministry of angels; and to Jacob and Joseph by visions and dreams. The book of Exodus is mainly occupied with special revelations to Moses and Aaron and their acts in consequence of them; the whole Mosaic "Law" embodied in that and the later books of the Pentateuch is of the same character. The books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel contain many special revelations to Joshua, the Judges, Samuel,

Nathan, and David ; and the books of Kings and Chronicles contain many more, to Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets. Of the poetical books, that of Job contains several chapters, spoken as by the voice of the Almighty ; and the Psalms have always been accounted as, in great part, prophetical. On the other hand, the books of the prophets, particularly Isaiah, Jonah, Daniel, and Jeremiah, contain no inconsiderable amount of strictly historical matter.

In the New Testament the four Gospels and the Acts are historical ; the twenty-one epistles are doctrinal and practical ; the book of Revelation is a prophetical vision. They have been handed down to us by the testimony of the Church from very ancient times as the genuine works of the persons whose

names they bear—six of them apostles, and the other two (Mark and Luke) companions of the apostles, Barnabas and Paul. The epistle to the Hebrews does not bear St. Paul's name, and has sometimes been thought to be written by Apollos, mentioned in the "Acts," and a question has been made as to the identity of "John the Divine" (*θεολόγος*), the author of the "Revelation," with the apostle John. To me, both the internal evidence and the weight of external authority appear to be in favour of the received authorship of both these books ; but, be that as it may, they have always been received as Scripture by the best authorities of the Church.

I have already said that the books of the Old Testament have the double witness of Christians and of Jews. They have always been most jealously and

sacredly kept and guarded by the Jewish nation ; and although it is probable that no Hebrew manuscript known to be now extant is as old as the beginning of the Christian era, there can be no doubt that the Greek or "Septuagint" translation of all those books was made, not indeed all at one time, but certainly all before the coming of Christ. All the prophetical, and almost all the historical books of the Old Testament, are quoted in the New ; most of them both in the Gospels and in the Epistles, and some of them very frequently. Most, if not all of them are also quoted by Philo the Alexandrian Jew, who was born before our Lord, and lived till the reign of the Emperor Caligula, or later ; and by Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and wrote the history

of that war. These (who both wrote in Greek) are the earliest writers of the Hebrew nation, except the Sacred Authors themselves whose works are now extant.

X

25th April 1880.

I now come to the Scripture testimonies as to their own authority; and this I shall take entirely from the Scriptures of the New Testament: having pointed out in my last letter how many and how large portions of the Old Testament directly lay claim to the character of Divine revelations.

The writers of the New Testament, when referring to the "Scriptures" could, of course, only mean those books which were in existence and regarded as authoritative when they wrote.

With a single exception all these references are, in fact, to the books of the Old Testament or some of them. Their testimony to the authority of the books which constitute the New Testament itself is, necessarily, of a different and less direct kind, and more nearly resembles that which we have seen to occur in the Old Testament as to some of its own constituent parts.

The first point to be observed in the testimony of the New Testament to the Old is the use, continually made, of the words *ai γραφαι* “*the Scriptures*” and the cognate verb “it is written,” etc. No one can read such passages as, “Ye do err, not knowing *the Scriptures*, nor the power of God” (Matt. xxii. 29); “How then shall *the Scriptures* be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matt. xxvi. 54); “*The Scriptures* must be

fulfilled" (Mark xiv. 49); "He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself" (Luke xxiv. 27); "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (*Ibid.* v. 45); "Search *the Scriptures*, for in them ye think ye have eternal life" (John v. 39),—all occurring in the narratives of our Lord's own discourses by the different Evangelists, without perceiving that they recognise the books, so referred to, not merely as true, but as having more than human authority. In the same Gospels, and in the Epistles, the leading historical facts recorded in the Old Testament (*e.g.* the Creation, the Fall, the history of Cain and Abel, the Flood, the destruction of Sodom, the histories of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha,

David, Solomon, the Delivery of the Law, the departure of the Israelites from Egypt and their wanderings in the wilderness, etc. etc.) are uniformly referred to as true. “The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (spoken of in Eph. vi. 17) can hardly mean anything else than “Scripture.” So much for the more general forms of expression, which show what our Lord and His apostles understood and taught concerning those books, which were received and acknowledged as of Divine authority by the Jewish Church.

But the witness of the New Testament to the Old does not rest upon general forms of expression and general assumptions of historical truth only. To the whole body of it, and to the Law, the Psalms and the books of the Prophets

specifically, there are more explicit and particular testimonies.

As to the general body of the Old Testament Scriptures there is an important passage in St. Paul's second epistle to Timothy (iii. 15, 16): "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures (*τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα*), which are able to make thee wise unto salvation (*τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν*). . . . All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (*πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος*), and is profitable for doctrine (*πρὸς διδασκαλίαν*), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (*ἵνα ἀρτιος ἦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος*).

As to "the Law" there are many notable passages, in the front of all of

which is the remarkable saying of our Lord Himself (Matt. v. 17, 18), “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled” (*iôta ûn ñ µia κερaia oû µñ πaρéλθñ àπò τoû νóμoυ, éwς àv πáνta γéνητai*). The word translated “tittle” is part of a letter (like the crossing of a *t*), and it is difficult to interpret this place as teaching any other doctrine, with respect to the Law (however that term ought here to be understood) than that of *literal* inspiration. That our Lord may here have had in view the Ten Commandments (said in Exodus xxxi. 18 and xxxiv. 1 and 28, and also in Deut. ix. 10 and x. 4, to have been written with

“the finger of God”) as containing the sum and essence of the whole Law, seems not improbable from some other passages, particularly Matt. xxii. 40, and Romans xiii. 8-10. He Himself (Matt. xv. 4) spoke of the fifth Commandment as “*God's*” ($\theta\epsilon\circ\delta\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\lambda\alpha\tau\circ$). Other parts of the books of the Pentateuch He recognised as prophetical of Himself (Luke xxiv. 44; John v. 45), and He quoted the words heard by Moses at the Bush (Exodus iii. 15) as spoken to the Israelites by God ($\tau\circ\ \acute{\rho}\eta\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\nu}\mu\acute{\iota}\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\acute{\circ}\ \tau\circ\acute{\iota}\ \theta\epsilon\circ\acute{\iota}\nu$). St. Paul (Gal. iii. 19 and 24) speaks of “the Law” as “ordained by angels, in the hand of a mediator” ($\delta\iota\alpha\tau\alpha\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\iota\ s\ \delta\iota'\ \acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega\nu$, $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \chi\acute{\epsilon}\iota\rho\acute{\iota}\ \mu\epsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\tau\circ\acute{\iota}\nu$); and as “our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ” ($\pi\alpha\iota\delta\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\circ\ \acute{\eta}\mu\acute{\omega}\nu\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\s$ $\chi\acute{\rho}\iota\sigma\acute{\tau}\acute{\o}\nu$). And in the epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 8), where the spiritual

significance of the ceremonial part of the Mosaic Law is unfolded, it is expressly said that this was signified by the Holy Ghost (*τοῦτο δηλοῦντος τοῦ Πνεύματος τοῦ Ἀγίου*). With respect to the Psalms some of them are quoted as spoken by David *ἐν πνεύματι* (Matt. xxii. 43); *ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ Ἅγιῳ* “*by the Holy Ghost*” (Mark xii. 36); as spoken by “the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David” (Acts i. 16); as sayings, simply, of the Holy Ghost (*καθὼς λέγει τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον*, Heb. iii. 7); or “in David” (*ἐν Δαβὶδ λέγων*, Heb. iv. 7); and the words of Psalm cx. are directly ascribed to God, “Called of God” (*προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ*) “an High Priest after the order of Melchisedek” (Heb. v. 10). The passages in which the Psalms are quoted as prophetic, or otherwise cited for proof of doctrine, are too numerous

to mention ; so that all that is said as to the inspiration of the prophetical Scriptures (which I must reserve for another letter) is strictly applicable to them.

XI

2nd May 1880.

I proceed, in continuation of my last letter, with the testimony of the New Testament to the *prophetical* Scriptures of the Old, which is very full and explicit. Every reader of the Gospels is familiar with the many passages in which the fulfilment of particular prophecies is spoken of, and in some of which particular things are said to have been done, or to have happened, that particular Scriptures of the Old Testament might be fulfilled. In such places the prediction and the event are set before us as having to each other a predetermined

relation originating in the Mind and Providence of God. There is no kind of evidence of the Divine Nature, Mission, and Work of our Lord Himself, and of the truth of His doctrine, to which both He and His apostles so frequently referred. The words of prophecy are constantly (*e.g.* in Matt. i. 22 and ii. 15) quoted, as spoken "*by* the Lord, *through* the prophet." Zacharias (Luke i. 68-70) blessed "the Lord God of Israel," because He had "visited and redeemed His people, etc., *as He spake by the mouth of His Holy Prophets*, which have been since the world began." To the two disciples, on the way to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 27), our Risen Lord "beginning at Moses and all the prophets expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." St. Peter, after the miracle of healing at the

“Beautiful” Gate of the Temple (Acts iii. 18 and 21), said, “Those things, which God before had shewed (*προκατήγειλε*) by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled,” and “Whom (Jesus Christ) the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken (*ὅν ἐλάλησεν οὐ θεός*) by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (*ἀπ’ αἰῶνος*). St. Paul opens the epistle to the Romans with his claim to be “an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which He had promised afore (*προεπηγγέιλατο*) by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” The epistle to the Hebrews begins: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken

unto us by His Son." In the epistles of St. Peter there are two passages of importance on this subject; in the first epistle (i. 10-12): "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow: unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister," etc. In the second epistle (i. 19-21), after speaking of what he had himself seen and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration, as enabling him to claim the character of an *ἐπόπτης* (or witness at first hand of Christ's superhuman Majesty) (*τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος*), he proceeds thus: "We have also *βεβαιό-*

τερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον" (which ought not, I think, to be translated "a more sure word of prophecy," but "a confirmation," or "greater assurance, hereby, of the word of prophecy"), "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts ; knowing this first, that *no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*" (*πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἴδιας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*—which I understand to mean that we are not to expound the words of the prophetical Scriptures by any inquiry into the private or personal intention or meaning of the individual who spoke or wrote them) ; "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (*οὐ γὰρ κατὰ θέλημα*

ἀνθρώπου ηνέχθη ποτὲ προφητεία, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ Πνεύματος Ἅγιου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἄγιοι θεοῦ ἀνθρωποι). This passage, beyond all question, teaches, as to the prophetical writings, a very full and general doctrine of inspiration.

It now remains for us to see what foundation there is in the New Testament itself for that part of the belief of the Christian Church which places it upon the same level in point of inspiration with the Old. Its testimony, in this respect, is in this sense *indirect*, that it is borne to *the writers* and to their authority, and (with one exception) *not* to any *books* identified by it as theirs and as already esteemed “Scriptures.” The one exception being in St. Peter’s second epistle (iii. 15, 16), where he refers to what St. Paul had written (*ἐγράψεν ὑμῖν*) in his epistles, “according to the

wisdom given unto him," adding, "in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest *as they do also the other Scriptures* (*ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς*) to their own destruction." From this general recognition of St. Paul's epistles as Scripture it is a natural and just inference that the other apostolic epistles (viz. those of St. Peter himself, St. James, St. John, and St. Jude) were also received from the time when they were written on the same footing. With respect to the other books of the New Testament the Gospels contain the record of the life on earth and the personal teaching of Our Lord Himself; who is there set before us as the Incarnate Son or "Word" of God (John i.) teaching "as one having authority" (*ώς ἔξουσίαν ἔχων*) and not as the Scribes"

(Matt. vii. 29); as speaking “the words of God” and having the Spirit “without measure” (John iii. 34), and as having in Himself by His Unity in the Divine Nature with the Father (to which constant reference is made in His discourses recorded by St. John) what St. Paul (Col. ii. 9) calls the “bodily indwelling” of “all the fulness of the Godhead” (*ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς*). The “Acts” are by the same historian (St. Luke) who wrote one of the Gospels and who was St. Paul’s companion and friend. The epistle to the Hebrews (whether by St. Paul, by Apollos, or by any other) is evidently authoritative, and the “Revelation” throughout purports to be what that word expresses.

XII

9th May 1880.

Though the New Testament does not, itself, say anything more direct than the passage as to St. Paul's epistles, which I quoted in my last letter from St. Peter, as to the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the composition of the books of which it consists (the book of Revelation excepted), it abounds in testimonies to the inspiration of the writers of those books, for all purposes necessary for the accomplishment of their ministry. Our Saviour after His Resurrection "breathed on" the apostles (*ἐνεφύσησε*), and said to them "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). He had told them before (Mark xiii. 11) that when, for what

should be done by their ministry, they should be delivered up to councils, and brought before rulers and kings, they should speak, without premeditation, whatever should be “given them” ($\delta\ \epsilon\alpha\nu\delta\theta\eta\ \nu\mu\hat{\iota}\nu$) “in that hour”; “for,” He added, “it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” ($o\bar{u}\ \gamma\acute{a}\rho\ \epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\ \nu\mu\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ o\iota\ \lambda\alpha\lambda\oupsilon\eta\tau\epsilon\varsigma,\ \alpha\lambda\lambda\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\grave{\circ}\ \Pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha\ \tau\grave{\circ}\ “A\gamma\iota\o\iota\varsigma$). He promised them that they should be “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (Acts i. 5); and on the day of Pentecost that promise was fulfilled in the manner of which we read in the second chapter of Acts, when they “were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” ($\kappa\alpha\theta\omega\varsigma\ \tau\grave{\circ}\ \Pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\iota}\mu\alpha\ \epsilon\delta\bar{i}\delta\o\iota\varsigma\ a\bar{u}\tau\o\iota\varsigma\ \alpha\pi\o\phi\theta\epsilon\gamma\gamma\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$). In the rest of the history recorded in that book not the apostles only but

the deacons (Stephen, particularly, and Philip) are presented to us as speaking and acting under special inspiration (Acts vii. 55 and viii. 26, 29, 39); and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were bestowed upon the converts at Samaria, upon the first Gentile converts in the house of Cornelius, and upon other disciples as Agabus, etc. (Acts viii. 17, 18; x. 44; xi. 28; xix. 6; xx. 23; also xxi. 4). The separation of Paul and Barnabas for their appointed work in Cyprus and Asia Minor, the decision of the Council of the Apostles held at Jerusalem, and other particular acts of the apostles are directly ascribed to the dictation or overruling power of the Holy Ghost (Acts xiii. 2, 4; xv. 28; x. 19; xvi. 6, 7). St. Paul speaks in like manner of himself as divinely inspired, and the

recipient of special revelations. In Romans (xv. 19) he says that his preaching was "through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (*ἐν δυνάμει σημείων καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει Πνεύματος Θεοῦ*). In 1 Cor. ii. 4, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (*ἐν ἀποδείξει Πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως*); and (in v. 12, 13), "Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." In the 14th chapter of the same epistle he writes (v. 37): "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual,

let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (*ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἀ γράφῳ*
ὑμῖν ὅτι τοῦ κυρίου εἰσὶν ἐντολαί). In the second epistle to the Corinthians (xii. 1) he refers to his own "visions and revelations of the Lord" (*οπτασίας καὶ*
ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου); to his having been caught up to the "third heaven" (*ἀρπα-*
γέντα ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ); "caught up into Paradise" (*ἥρπαγη εἰς τὸν παρά-*
δεισον), and as having "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." In the epistle to the Galatians (i. 11, 12), he says distinctly: "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Again, to the Ephesians (iii. 3-7), he says

that God made known to him, “by revelation,” the “mystery of Christ” (*κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνώρισέ μοι*) ; and that this mystery “in other ages was not made known” (*οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη*) “to the sons of men, as it is now revealed, unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit” (*ώς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις ἐν Πνεύματι*). In the first epistle to the Thessalonians (i. 5 and ii. 13), he says : “Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost”; and “when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, *but as it is in truth, the word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” St. Peter, in a passage of his first epistle to which I referred, for another purpose, in my

last letter (1 Peter i. 12), speaks of the things revealed to the Prophets of the older Scriptures, as the same “which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” adding, that they are things which “the angels desire to look into”; and again, in his second epistle (iii. 2) he puts on the same level the authority of the Prophets and of the apostles, urging the disciples to “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment” ($\tau\hat{\eta}s \epsilon\nu\tau o\lambda\hat{\eta}s$) “of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”

More might be added to the same effect; but this is enough to show what a clear and broad foundation is laid in the New Testament for the extension of

the same doctrine of inspiration, which is applicable to the books of a similar character in the Old Testament, to the several compositions of which it consists. For there is certainly no less reason for believing St. Mark and St. Luke (though not themselves Apostles) to have been partakers of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, than there is for believing the same thing of others, who, though not apostles, bore a part in the apostolic ministry under apostolic direction; such, *e.g.* as St. Stephen, and the deacon Philip. St. Mark was the nephew (sister's son) of Barnabas, the fellow-apostle of St. Paul to the Gentiles (see Col. iv. 10): his mother's house in Jerusalem was the place in which the disciples were assembled at night, praying for St. Peter at the time of St. Peter's miraculous deliverance from

prison (Acts xii. 12). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch immediately after that event, and went with them on their first missionary journey in Asia Minor as far as Pamphylia (Acts xii. 25 and xv. 38). St. Paul was indeed displeased with him for then leaving them; and this was the occasion of a difference between Paul and Barnabas, whom he accompanied upon the later missionary journey, which Barnabas took by himself to Cyprus (Acts xv. 39). But the intercourse between him and St. Paul was afterwards renewed. St. Paul especially commends him to the Colossians (Col. iv. 10); to Philemon (*v.* 24) he speaks of Mark, Luke, and two others as his “fellow-labourers”; and when, shortly before his own martyrdom (Luke alone being then with him) he desires Timothy

to come to him at Rome, he says (2 Tim. iv. 11): “Take Mark, and bring him with thee; *for he is profitable to me for the ministry*” (*ἔστι γάρ μοι εὐχρηστός εἰς διακονίαν*). The tradition of the Church was, that he was also the companion of St. Peter. Of St. Luke, besides the passages already mentioned, we know that he accompanied St. Paul on his second missionary journey (see the first person plural, in Acts xvi. 10 and xx. 16, 13, etc. etc.). St. Paul (Col. iv. 14) calls him “the beloved physician,” and in his account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. xi. 25) uses, as to the cup, the same words which are in St. Luke’s Gospel (xxii. 20).

XIII

23rd May 1880.

The general result of the Scripture

testimonies, as to the inspiration of the books of which the Bible consists, which have been the subject of my last three letters, is, that while *all* Scripture is spoken of, generally, as divinely inspired in some true and real sense ($\theta\epsilon\circ\pi\nu\epsilon\nu\sigma\tau\circ\delta$), nothing is said more particularly as to the mode, degree, or other conditions of that inspiration, except as to "the Law," and as to the prophetical writings of the Old Testament. "The Law" (meaning perhaps the Ten Commandments) is spoken of in terms which seem to imply verbal and literal inspiration, and the prophecies, as written under such an overpowering impulse as to make an inquiry into the private and particular sense of the human agent no just clue to their true interpretation. As to the historical books nothing is said anywhere which requires us to

suppose that the knowledge of such historical facts as might have taken place in the writer's own time, or might have been recorded in written documents, or national or official traditions of earlier date to which he had access, was itself the subject of special revelation ; or that in these or other parts of Scripture, not prophetic or purporting to be specially revealed, the powers and faculties of the human agent were any further controlled, than was needful to exclude substantial error in the use of materials humanly accessible. Bishop Horsley (my father's uncle), who has always been considered a very sound and able theologian, says, upon this point : "God, even in the more immediate interpositions of His providence, acts by natural means and second causes, so far as natural means and second causes may

be made to serve the purpose. The influence, therefore, of the inspiring Spirit on the mind of an historian can be nothing more than to secure him from mistake and falsity, by strengthening his memory, and by maintaining in his heart a religious love and reverence for truth that he may be incapable of omission through forgetfulness, and may be invincibly fortified against all temptations to forge, conceal, disguise, or prevaricate. That inspiration ever was the means of conveying the first knowledge of facts to an historian's mind is a very unreasonable supposition. It is to suppose an unnecessary miracle. For a miracle is always unnecessary where natural means might serve the purpose." There are, perhaps, one or two expressions in this passage which may want some slight qualifi-

cation: such *facts* (*e.g.*) as those recorded in the first chapter of Genesis could only have been made known to man by some kind of revelation, and it may be going too far, when we are speaking of the influence of that "Spirit" whom the Lord compares to the wind, which "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth," to say that it "*can be nothing more than*" what we are able to define, in any case whatsoever. But the bishop would, doubtless, have admitted these qualifications of his words; and, so qualified, they seem to me to be just and reasonable.

I have dwelt upon these points because you can hardly give that degree of attention which their importance deserves to Biblical studies, or even read

the lighter philosophical and theological literature of the day without becoming aware of the existence of controversies on the subject of inspiration, and of a criticism which seeks to overthrow the authority of Scripture by pointing out in the text, as we have it, of various books, supposed discrepancies and errors. These discrepancies and errors (if they were all really such) make, in their sum total, no difference of the least importance to the spiritual and religious teaching, either of the Bible as a whole, or of those particular parts of the Bible in which they occur ; they are due (still assuming them to be really discrepancies and errors) to the fallibility of the human instruments, in points affecting the mere form and vehicle of the Divine message as delivered by them, on which they might well have been left uncontrolled

by the Divine Spirit, consistently with everything which the Scriptures themselves say as to their own authority and inspiration; and if, on the one hand, they are errors which human imperfection may have been permitted to fall into, they are, on the other, such as human criticism is assumed (by the hypothesis) to be able to discover and elucidate. A Christian, who does not stake his faith on any human theory, whether of inspiration or of anything else which the Scriptures themselves do not teach, need not be afraid of having it shaken by any possible results of this kind of criticism. Even in the most ordinary affairs of men, witnesses of the same events most thoroughly to be trusted and believed, will vary in the form and order and in some particulars of their testimony, and may make

mistakes, either of observation or of memory, on collateral and immaterial points. If it was God's will that even the sacred historians should not be exempt from these conditions of humanity, this, as it seems to me, ought to make no difference whatever, unless it could be shown (which it never can) to invalidate or reduce to substantial inconsistency or uncertainty their narrative of those facts and doctrines which are spiritually and religiously important. Nothing can be clearer or more decided than the language of Scripture itself as to the sins, errors, and imperfections of those whom it nevertheless represents as the chosen instruments and messengers of God. David, for example, and Solomon, on at least one occasion Moses, St. Peter also and Barnabas, when they were reproved by St. Paul

(Gal. ii. 11-14). There are parts of St. Paul's epistles in which he seems expressly to distinguish between what he says of himself and what he says by Divine commandment (see 1 Cor. vii. 25, 26, 40), yet, even when he expresses only his own judgment, not speaking without the "Spirit of God." And it requires no critical discernment to see that there are many other places in his epistles, in which (if Bishop Horsley's principle is not wholly wrong) he speaks of things, as to which an over-ruling inspiration could not be necessary, and therefore need not be assumed.

Having said so much as this upon the supposition that criticism *can* point out real discrepancies and errors in the Scriptures, I should wish, in a future letter, to say something as to the very

slight grounds which there are, after all, for any such opinion. That corruptions and variations of the text of Scripture have been permitted (though not so as to be of any real consequence) is, no doubt, true; but I do not think there are any real errors, capable of proof, unless such as may be due to this cause.

XIV

24th October 1880.

I have been referring to my last letter to you which I see was dated the 23rd of May,—just five months ago. It was occupied, as several which came before it were, with the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures, as that doctrine is placed before us, not by any school of theologians, but in the Scriptures themselves. We saw that such a doctrine was generally, freely, and largely taught

there, and, as to some particular matters contained in the Scriptures, stated in terms very absolute and unqualified; but yet, that there was nothing said from which it would be a necessary inference, that those who were inspired to write those books were in all points small as well as great, and whether important or not to the spiritual purpose of the record, preserved from the possibility of error. If the writers were left to the use of their human faculties like other men, with the infirmities and imperfections incident to them, as to such matters as might affect the vehicle and form only, and not the substance of the deposit entrusted to them, and to be delivered through their means to future generations, and if it could be shown by human criticism that there are, in fact, some errors of this kind in parts of what

they wrote, this would neither be at variance with anything of which the Scriptures themselves inform us, nor inconsistent with the general conditions of the moral probation of man.

But I said that I intended, in a future letter, to observe on the slightness of the grounds on which criticisms of this kind generally, if not always, proceed. I do not, of course, mean to go fully into such a subject, any more than into that of what are commonly called "evidences" in these letters; they are both large subjects deserving of careful and attentive study, but involving much detail which would be inconsistent with my present purpose. What I wish to do is to set before you some leading general views, which, if such a study is undertaken, may help a man to pursue it in a reasonable, cautious, and reverent spirit;

and may, in the meantime, prevent some things from being felt as difficulties, which are often so represented without sufficient cause.

A distinction must, at the outset, be made between that unbelieving criticism which rejects a fact recorded in the Scriptures,—*e.g.* a miracle or inspiration itself,—because the dogmas of unbelief declare such a fact to be impossible, or incapable of being proved by any evidence, and objections, grounded on some alleged inconsistency of a Scripture narrative with a fact otherwise known, or with some other part of the Scriptures themselves. With the former kind of criticism we have here nothing to do. In one or more of my earlier letters I said as much as I then thought necessary on the side opposed to its general assumptions ; and on the particular subject

of Miracles I may have more to say when I speak of the substance of the revelation recorded in the Scriptures. It is to the latter kind of criticism only that I wish at present to refer.

In dealing with objections founded upon alleged inconsistencies, either with facts otherwise known or with other parts of Scripture, the first thing is to be sure that there really is any inconsistency; and, if our knowledge of the whole matter is not sufficient to make this clear it is reasonable to believe that, if we knew more about it, the apparent inconsistency might disappear. The writers of the Scriptures ought at least to be judged with as much fairness and candour as any other writers of good credit, as to things on which they had (apart from inspiration) certain or probable means of knowledge; and, as to

other things, which they either profess to have received by inspiration, or have handed down from traditions received as authentic history by generations earlier than their own, we ought to be well assured, (1) that we interpret them reasonably and rightly, and (2) that we really have a true knowledge of the other facts with which we compare them before we conclude that there is any error.

I will take my first instances from those narratives in the early books of the Old Testament which are sometimes represented as inconsistent with the discoveries of modern Science. Of the way in which mere unreasonableness of interpretation may create, and mere reasonableness of interpretation may remove difficulties of this kind there can be no better illustration than the

attitude of the Papal Church towards the discoveries of Galileo. When the Scripture spoke of the sun as "rising," "standing still," "going down," "going forth from the end of the heaven and having his circuit unto the end of it," the papal theologians construed this language, as if it had been that of a treatise on Astronomy; and they condemned the doctrine that the sun was stationary and that the earth moved round it, as inconsistent with the Scriptures, and therefore heretical. Nobody now imagines that there is any such inconsistency. Everybody now knows that it was no part of the purpose of those passages in Scripture to teach Astronomy; and everybody now understands their language, as describing natural phenomena in a way which the universal practice of men, since as

well as before the discoveries of Galileo, proves to be natural and appropriate. It seems to me to be in no degree whatever more reasonable to treat the first chapter of Genesis as necessarily to be interpreted upon the principles of scientific literalism, with "days" of twenty-four hours, and the evenings and mornings of such days, rather than as a vivid summary of a tradition, divinely imparted to the first fathers of the human race (whether by vision or otherwise), of the successive stages of the Order of Creation, by which the earth was prepared for the habitation of man. So understood (as it ought to be), it is, of course, not addressed to the purpose of revealing or anticipating the science of Geology; the discrepancies alleged to exist in some points of detail between that

narrative, geologically interpreted, and the facts of geology, are really not relevant; while the *general* agreement is really wonderful.

XV

31st October 1880.

I think it may be well to dwell a little longer upon the first chapter of Genesis as an example of the futility of a certain class of objections against the truth of Scripture. Taking it to be a revelation of the Order of Creation, as far only as this earth and man as its inhabitant are concerned, presented according to the series of characteristic phenomena, its agreement with the conclusions of Geology on the same subject is (as I said in my last letter) really wonderful, while its divergence from some of those conclusions on points of detail is only

apparent. I have thought it worth while to translate the order of phenomena set before us in that chapter into the terms of natural philosophy, and I think you will see that, in doing so, I impose no sense upon any part of the narrative which it will not quite reasonably and naturally bear. And, on the other hand, you will find that the progress of this earth, from its primordial to its present condition, as deduced by Geology from the study of its superficial deposits, rocks, and fossils, is substantially the same as in this order of phenomena. *First*, we have the globe in such a condition as would exist under the action of intense heat, and the atmosphere so charged with heavy vapours as to be impervious to light. Then comes a change, which admits the passage of light; which would happen as the heat diminished, and the grosser

substances suspended in the atmosphere were discharged in a solid state. The next stage would be such a further reduction of heat as to admit of the simultaneous rarefaction of some aqueous matter in the shape of air or cloud, and the condensation of other like matter in the shape of water. Then follows the segregation of water from land upon the surface of the globe, and the formation of seas, islands, and continents. Then the development, under a heat still great and producing a perpetually foggy and clouded atmosphere, of a rank and luxuriant vegetable life. Then as the internal heat became further reduced, such a clearance of the atmosphere as to bring it to its present condition, in which the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars are visible from the surface of the earth, except when temporarily obscured.

Then comes a teeming vertebrate animal life, first in the waters, and in the air—saurians, fishes, and birds; later, on the dry land, beasts of all kinds; and, last of all, Man. Now, to me, it is hardly conceivable that this sequence, corresponding so well as it does with the order now declared by science, could ever have been imagined for himself by primitive man. And what, on the other hand, are the supposed discrepancies? Merely (as far as I can see), that some of the lower and smaller forms of invertebrate animal life are found co-existent with (what I may describe as) the “vegetable epoch,” which in the Scripture narrative occupies the “third day.” But what is there in the narrative which requires an interpretation inconsistent with this fact? Not, certainly, the opening words of the

20th verse, "And God said, Let the waters *bring forth abundantly*," etc. To be silent, in a narrative of this character, as to a fact of subordinate position, and not phenomenally conspicuous or characteristic, is a quite different thing from a statement contradictory to that fact.

The object of a Divine revelation being spiritual, it was indeed to be expected that some account of the origin of man himself and of the world he lives in would be contained in it, and that this account, properly understood, would be a true one. But, inasmuch as the whole purpose of such an account would be, not to inform him of abstract truths or natural facts which he might discover and investigate by the use of his own faculties, but to give him that elementary knowledge of God as the Creator which was needful to

enable him to understand his own place in the universe and his relation to God, nothing more than that purpose would require ought to be looked for, either in the form or in the substance of the narrative. And it is wholly immaterial (when that purpose is steadily borne in mind) whether the words of the narrative might be liable to be taken more or less literally, by races or generations of men, or individual men of any race or generation, uninstructed in natural science ; or whether, when there came to be a more accurate scientific knowledge, such literalness of interpretation might be seen to be inconsistent with it. The very fact that a Divine revelation is intended for all men, all races, all generations to whom it comes,—and for the ignorant (those whom the Scripture calls “babes”), the common people,

as much as the “wise and prudent,” makes it proper, and indeed necessary, that its vehicle should be popular language, which all can understand, always and everywhere, sufficiently for the spiritual purpose, though as to things indifferent, which concern its form only, their apprehensions of its meaning may vary, according to time, place, and circumstance. A fixed and precise scientific phraseology would have been unintelligible to the mass of mankind.

XVI

14th November 1880.

It is a natural sequel to my last letter to take notice of the few other references in Scripture to physical facts, which some persons have supposed to be at variance with the conclusions of

science. I do not reckon among them such passages as Joshua x. 12-14 (a passage which professes to be taken from the lost poetical "book of Jasher") and 2 Kings xx. 9-11. In whatever way we may suppose the extraordinary prolongation of light spoken of in the first of these places to have happened (you will find something on that subject in Stanley's *Jewish Church*, which may or may not be satisfactory), and the receding shadow upon the sun-dial mentioned in the latter to have been produced,—whether by miracle or by any other extraordinary cause coinciding with prayer and prophecy,—the language used in them is popular and phenomenal, and certainly does not require to be astronomically interpreted, as if the earth must have receded or ceased to revolve upon its

axis, for these appearances to have taken place. I will not now dwell further upon this point, connected as it is with the subject of the general popular character of Scripture language, to which I shall hereafter refer; but I will speak of the only two subjects which I think it worth while now to dwell upon—the history of the Flood, and the human chronology of the book of Genesis.

To the history of the Flood, as it is recorded in the 6th and 7th chapters of Genesis, the only objections offered in the name of science that I am aware of are, that a vessel of the dimensions of the ark could not have contained pairs (or sevens, in the case of “clean” animals) of all the species of terrestrial animals and fowls now known to exist on the surface of the globe, and

that there are geological reasons for concluding that the highest mountain tops now existing upon the earth have not undergone submersion in water since they were first elevated above the surface. But if this be so, it only goes to show that the flood spoken of in these chapters, if the tradition in which the record of it was preserved is true and faithful, as Christians believe, and as it is assumed to be in the words of our Lord and His apostles (Matt. xxiv. 37-39; Heb. xi. 7; 1 Peter iii. 20; and 2 Peter ii. 5, etc.) is there described, as it would be, according to the natural use of human language, by an eye-witness who saw all the highest ground in that part of the earth which man then inhabited covered by water, and who spoke of the animals and birds of that region as if there were no others in the

world. The language of Genesis vii. 14-23 does not more necessarily import absolute terraqueous universality than does *πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη* in Luke ii. 1, where we know that no such thing is meant. And here, again, the confirmation which the main substance of the narrative receives from external sources is much more remarkable than the answer to these cavils against the letter of it is difficult. From geology itself we learn that immense cataclysms, submerging vast regions of the earth, have certainly occurred at various periods of its existence. Alluvial drifts are very extensively distributed over the surface of the globe, which may not, indeed, all be due to so recent a deluge, but some of which might well have been caused by it. And among all known races of men, in all parts of the world, there has been,

and is, a tradition of such a deluge, certainly not derived from the Bible history, which (with whatever accretions of fable it may be in one place or another accompanied) is really nothing less than a common testimony of all the now so widely distributed families of man to a destruction by water, affecting universally that part or those parts of the inhabited globe in which the ancestors of the existing races lived. Before leaving this subject it may not be amiss to add, that what is said of the future destruction of the earth by fire in 2 Peter iii. 10 coincides with the conclusions drawn from physical data by many modern astronomers and geologists.

The human chronology of the book of Genesis is contained in the 5th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 22nd, and 25th chapters of that book, which (followed up by the later

chronology belonging to the historic times of the Israelitish annals) are the foundation of the computation of 4000 years or thereabouts for the period of man's existence upon the earth before the coming of Christ. Modern anthropologists, of the school of the late Sir Charles Lyell and the present Sir John Lubbock in this country, and others abroad, draw the inference from the flint arrow-heads and other rude weapons and utensils of the same material found in gravel-drifts in various places, and in many parts of the world, and from a small number of other traces of human remains or human manufacture, discovered in similar drifts or in bone-caves, etc., that the human race must have inhabited the earth when those alluvial deposits were formed in the places where these things have been

found, and to these drifts or deposits they assign, on geological grounds, a much more remote antiquity than is consistent with the chronology in question. If these reasons were accepted as satisfactory, the conclusion would follow (and it is that which these writers draw), that the human race has existed on the earth much longer (they say for an immense period) than is represented in the book of Genesis. I shall return to this subject in my next letter.

XVII

21st November 1880.

The “anthropological” theories, of which I spoke in my last letter, require themselves to be fully proved before they can furnish sufficient grounds for discrediting the received chronology. I shall have something to say about the

supposed proofs on which they rest. But I think it best, at the outset, to assume that they may possibly be founded on sufficient evidence: because (1) my own examination of that evidence has not been so close as would be necessary to justify me in laying down the law about it; (2) because its sufficiency is maintained by some men, of considerable logical power and undoubted scientific eminence; and (3) because, when any new theory has become current and popular, it is often much more important that we should perceive what would, and what would not, follow from it, if true, than that we should be able to verify or disprove it to our own or other people's satisfaction.

If, then, we have really attained, by the observations of science, to a reasonably certain knowledge that man must

have existed upon the earth for a longer time than is consistent with the received chronology, it must follow, of course, that the received chronology, though embodied in the book of Genesis, is not matter of Divine revelation. It must, in that case, be the result of one or other of these two things : (1) the incorporation in that book of some primitive traditions, recorded as they had come down from earlier generations of men, without the interposition of any Divine influence to clear them, on points immaterial to theology and religion, from all admixture of human error; or (2) corruption or interpolation of the original text by transcribers or commentators; such as we know to have happened in many other parts of the Bible (though it is very noteworthy that it has nowhere happened to such an extent, or in

such a manner, as to be theologically important); and from which, therefore, we know the integrity of the original text not to have been, in all respects, divinely preserved.

It is unnecessary to determine which of these two views would be the more probable. For the second it may be said that, in all very ancient writings, figures, or the symbols of number, have been peculiarly liable to corruption or variation; of which the very figures in question are an example, being now different in the Samaritan and Hebrew texts, and in the Greek version. For the former view, arguments may be derived from the character of the passages on which the chronology in question depends (in Genesis v. and xi.), and of other genealogical passages (like them, except in the absence of any

reckoning of time) in other parts of the Old Testament, particularly those in the 10th and 36th chapters of Genesis, and in the first nine chapters of the first book of Chronicles.

In either view there would be nothing inconsistent with anything on the subject of inspiration which is to be found in the Scriptures themselves. Nothing whatever is founded upon this chronology, or upon these numbers, in any other part of the Scripture. So far as I am aware, no reference to them is to be found, for any purpose.

When we come to consider whether the “anthropological” theory is made out, there are some broad and obvious facts, which are against it, and are favourable to the received chronology. All that man *really knows* of man comes within the limits of the received chrono-

logy, all known human history and literature, and all art higher than the rudest stone-chipping. That rude stone-chipping itself, if it belongs at all, certainly does not belong altogether to a higher antiquity; its co-existence in many places with later developments of human culture is unquestionable; and it exists to this day among savage races. The present population of the world is not greater, the traces and remains of its population in former times are not other, than they might be expected to be, according to the received chronology. There are no remains of buildings or habitations of any sort—lake dwellings, circular huts, or any other—for which a higher antiquity can, on any reasonable grounds, be claimed.

The traditions of the Egyptian priests, mentioned by Herodotus, and the lists

of dynasties and kings preserved in a fragment of Manetho (an Egyptian priest under the Ptolemies) must be assumed (1) to be historical, and (2) to represent continuous succession, and not the simultaneous reigns of different dynasties in different places, before they can be of any weight in this question. Here I must, for the present, break off.

XVIII

28th November 1880.

Different minds may estimate differently the inferences in favour of the received chronology from the known facts and traditions of human history, to which I referred at the end of my last letter. To me they seem to be of very great weight. We know what the results of the intellectual activities of the last 4000 years are;

we inherit them at this day. We know that all the traditions of our race, even those (such as the early chapters of the book of Genesis, as regarded from a merely human point of view) which reach back beyond that of a general Deluge, point to activities and conditions of life similar in kind to those which still continue, however different in some of their circumstances. Those which, like the Egyptian, make the highest pretension to antiquity, represent man, not as in a barbarous state, but as in a well-organised civil society. We know that at the present day there are no races of men, however rude, which have not, in a greater or less degree according to the natural resources of the countries in which they live and the degree of security which they enjoy, their own useful and orna-

mental arts,—their dwellings, canoes, sepulchres, weapons, utensils, textile and other fabrics. Perishable as many of these may be, they are certainly not more so than the leaves and fruits found imbedded in our Sheppey and other lacustrine clays; and, if the tracts now inhabited by these races were to be submerged and covered with alluvial deposits, the remains of many of these products of human intelligence and industry must be preserved in many places and in various forms. Those races which we now call “prehistoric,” because we know nothing about their history, have left behind them, in a great many different parts of the world, vast stone monuments, of the kind of which Stonehenge is an example, and sepulchral barrows and tumuli (such as those on our own heaths and downs)

containing not only human remains but pottery and other things of ancient manufacture ; there are also the Colossi of Easter Island, the ruined cities of Central America, the Lake dwellings of Switzerland, etc., the buried palaces of Mesopotamia, the tombs of Etruria and Mycenæ. There is no reason to doubt that all these come, as we know that some of them certainly do, far within the limits of the received chronology ; those of Mesopotamia, Etruria, and Greece are indeed more or less within the period which we call historical. Now of everything of this kind, of anything even remotely resembling it, there is a total absence in the alluvial deposits which contain the chipped flints from which such large conclusions are drawn, or in any other terrestrial deposits whatever of greater age than

the received chronology. If those chipped flints (chipped, I assume and believe, by human intelligence for implements or weapons of human use) were really coeval with the geological formations—generally alluvial gravels—in which they are found buried, often in considerable quantities, why are not human bones and other remains found in the same formations in corresponding abundance, as those of many of the lower animals unquestionably are? As a matter of fact they are not so found. You can count, as it were, upon your fingers the instances of organic human remains which are impressed into the service of Sir Charles Lyell and Sir John Lubbock's arguments. Almost all these are from caves which may have been used by men as dens or hiding-places within the received chrono-

logy, or into which human bodies may have been carried by water in a general or local inundation. The stalagmitic deposit which covers the floors of such caves and preserves the bones found in them has been continually going on; and any partial disturbance of it may have caused some bones of a later to be mixed with others of an earlier epoch. The bones of other animals found in those caves (though now generally believed to be of more ancient date, and some of them those of animals now found in warmer climates only) are all of kinds now known upon the earth.

The real weight of the argument rests more upon the chipped flints than upon anything else. These are rude, simple, and without much variety, either of design or of apparent use. Before the conclusion that they are

either coeval with or earlier than the deposits in which they are found can be established it must be proved in each case with reasonable certainty, (1) that those deposits were not dug into or otherwise disturbed, and afterwards filled in again, in the places where these things occur; and (2) that they cannot have been covered up, where they are now found, by the shifting or accumulation of drifts, through the action of rains, floods, or other causes which may have been in operation within the last 6000 years.

XIX

13th February 1881.

It is not necessary to pursue further the subject of supposed discrepancies between Scripture and the discoveries

of Science which occupied several of my later letters to you. Enough was said in them to enable you to understand the general grounds on which I come to the conclusion that there are no discrepancies of that kind, of such a nature, or established by such evidence, as to be of any real weight or importance.

Another kind of criticism, more petty and captious, against which the student of Scripture ought to be fore-armed, consists in the suggestion of inconsistencies in different Scripture narratives of the same event. On a comparison of the first three (often called the "Synoptic") Gospels, the same discourses and other events often are, or seem to be, related by the different Evangelists in *an order* more or less different; and although in some cases

the same discourse may not unreasonably be supposed to have been repeated oftener than once, this explanation would, in other cases, be unsatisfactory. The real answer seems to be that the precise order of time or sequence is not, in any respect, important to these narratives; and that such variations in the arrangement of true facts, truly recorded, according to their connection and association in each writer's mind, are no more inconsistent with the doctrine of inspiration, rightly and reasonably understood, than they are with accuracy and trustworthiness in an uninspired historian.

That one Evangelist also, in relating the same occurrence, should add some particulars which another writing either before or afterwards, may omit, is (it need hardly be said) consistent with

the truth of both narratives. The mention *e.g.* in one place of one person only, who was the chief speaker or actor upon a particular occasion (such as Blind Bartimæus), is perfectly consistent with the fact, appearing in another place, that he had a fellow-sufferer for his companion at the time. The two places in which the end of the traitor Judas is mentioned seem at first sight to be, but are not really inconsistent. In both places the reference to that event is incidental and parenthetical. The statement in Matthew xxvii. 5 may well be reconciled with that in Acts i. 18, if it is taken to relate, summarily and by anticipation, what happened not on the instant of Judas leaving the priests and elders, but after the purchase of the potter's field with "the reward of

iniquity," recorded in the verses of St. Matthew which immediately follow. The words in Acts (*οὗτος μὲν οὖν ἐκπήσατο χωρίον ἐκ τοῦ μισθοῦ τῆς ἀδικίας*) are not inapplicable to such an involuntary acquisition, with the money which he left the chief priests to use as they pleased, as St. Matthew records—this, a place to die in, and to be buried in as a "stranger," was what he got, and all that he got "*out*" of those pieces of silver, for which he had sold his Lord and his own soul. Of this purchase he heard; to that spot he resorted for self-destruction. There, in a precipitous place, he (not "*hanged*" but) "*strangled himself*" (*ἀπήγξατο*); and, having done so, his body might easily be found in the state described by St. Peter (Acts i. 18). Variations like these, in the circumstances of events

not belonging to the main narrative, and only referred to by the way, are rather evidence of the truthfulness of writings in which no pains are taken to reconcile them, than the reverse.

I will add two more instances, which have been sometimes alleged as inconsistencies by the superficial and the ignorant, but which only show the levity and carelessness with which such criticisms can be made. The first relates to the place where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. Our Lord, according to St. Matthew (v. 1), "went up into *a mountain*" (the Greek is $\tauὸ\delta\circ\betaο\sigma$, not *a* mountain, but *the* mountain range of that country) to deliver it. St. Luke, after saying (vi. 12) that "He went out into a mountain" (again $\tauὸ\delta\circ\betaο\sigma$) "to pray," and that He there chose His twelve apostles, adds (v. 17) that

He "came down with them, and stood *in the plain*," and there delivered (what appears to be) the same discourse. "*A mountain*" and "*the plain*" are supposed to be contradictory descriptions of the same place. But when we look at the Greek, the supposed contradiction disappears. "*καὶ καταβὰς μετ' αὐτῶν, ἔστη ἐπὶ τόπου πεδινοῦ*," means, not a descent from mountain to plain, but a descent from a higher to a lower spot in the same mountain-range, and to a platform of level, or comparatively level ground, not below, but upon the mountain.

The other instance is that of St. Paul's conversion. His companions are said in one place (Acts ix. 7) to have "heard the voice" but seen "no man" (*ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς, μηδένα δὲ θεωροῦντες*). In another (Acts xxii. 9)

it is said that they “saw indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me” (*τὸ μὲν φῶς ἔθεάσαντο, τὴν δὲ φωνὴν οὐκ ἤκουσαν τοῦ λαλοῦντός μοι*). . This has been represented as if it were said, in the ninth chapter, that they heard but did not see, and in the twenty-second, that they saw but did not hear. But this is not so; they both saw and heard; but they saw a light only, not the revelation of the Lord; they heard the sound only of a voice, not the words spoken to the apostle by the Lord.

I will add but one more illustration. If the twenty-second verse of the third chapter of St. John's Gospel (which says that Jesus “baptized”) and the second verse of the next chapter (which says that “Jesus Himself baptized not, but his disciples”) had occurred in different

Gospels we should have been told that they contradicted each other. As it is, their consistency is plain, the one passage only explaining the other.

XX

20th February 1881.

As I have endeavoured, in former letters, to give you a general idea of the kind of answers which seem to me satisfactory to certain lines of criticism (directed against the authority of Holy Scripture) with which you might be likely to meet either in books or in conversation, it may be well before leaving that subject to add something more as to the criticism which concerns itself with the authorship of the books of Scripture, and the time of their composition.

Upon the whole body of this criticism, there are some preliminary observations which it may be of importance to make.

It is no very difficult exercise of learned ingenuity to suggest plausible reasons for doubting the authorship or date of almost any ancient book which it suits the theorist to call in question ; and the number of those persons who both can and will closely investigate the grounds alleged for such doubts, with minds not already biassed in that direction, is usually small. The received text of such ancient books is, almost always, derived from manuscripts of a much later date than the time of the reputed authors, and in some cases from a very small number of such manuscripts ; and it is never free from interpolation or corruption. The more ancient it is,

the less there is of strictly, or nearly, contemporaneous evidence by which to test it,—of other literature with which it may be compared, or of references to and citations from it which may approximately fix its date. Differences (real, or fancied) in the vocabulary, idiom, or style of different works ascribed to the same writer or the same period, or in different parts of the same book, supposed anachronisms of language or fact, or unhistorical statements, and the like, form the stock arguments of this kind of criticism. No line of argument affords greater facilities for passing off conjecture as fact, and founding entire chains of reasoning upon postulates which are contradicted by experience. A statement may be rejected as unhistorical, merely because the critic thinks it incredible, or assumes the superior credit

of some writer who is either silent about it, or has handed down a different tradition; though (unless the question in controversy is assumed) there would be nothing to entitle that other writer to superior credit. A supposed anachronism may exist only in the critic's mind; a word, for instance, in a Hebrew or Chaldee book may be assumed to have been introduced from the Greek into the Eastern language after the time of Alexander; when it may really have been introduced before the time of Alexander into the Greek language from the East. A real anachronism may be no part of the genuine text, but may have come in through an interpolation or note by some later copyist or editor. Differences of vocabulary, idiom, or style, quite as important as those which these critics generally rely

on, often occur, not only in works of one period, but in different works or different parts of the same work of the same modern author; and are then readily understood to be accounted for by the mere interval of time between the earlier and the later composition. Fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, or even a less number of years will naturally produce very considerable changes in the phraseology, idiom, manner, and other characteristics of mind and of style of the same man; and others may depend upon the nature of the occasion and the subject. The battle of Homeric criticism (which is an example of this kind) rages till this day, and probably will as long as the Greek learning lasts. But to those who feel the weight of broad internal evidence, as compared with the *labor ineptiarum* of the destructive school, no paradox can be

greater than that which represents either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* as a collection, arranged in a later age, of the unconnected rhapsodies of a number of different hands; and even the theory (less strangely paradoxical) that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are not the works of one mind is perceived by common sense and poetical insight to rest upon grounds wholly inadequate to support such a conclusion. There have been critics who have (not, I believe, very long since) gravely propounded the theory that the *Annals* of Tacitus are not a genuine work of the Roman historian, but were written in his name by some Italian ecclesiastic of the fifteenth or sixteenth century, and certainly, if a mere comparison of style with style were enough for that purpose, there is difference enough to

be the foundation of such an argument between the style of the *Annals* and that of the *Histories*. A still more recent and familiar example of the anatomical criticism of literature is that of which Shakespeare's plays are at the present day the subject. Many of them are, no doubt, examples of a fact, which has its parallel in the conditions of the Biblical controversies, viz.: that a work may have been made up partly of the genuine and original writing of the author whose name it bears, and partly of other writings incorporated into that work, and adopted by the reputed author. As for those who pronounce historical narratives to be mythical or unhistorical, merely because they think them *a priori* incredible, I can do no better than advise you to read (if it should ever fall in your way) a happy

“parody” upon this sort of criticism called *Historic Doubts as to Napoleon Bonaparte*, by the late Archbishop Whately.

XXI

27th February 1881.

Applying the general observations which were made in my last letter to the questions which are sometimes raised as to the authorship and dates of the books of the Old Testament, the first thing which it is important to remember is that all philological criticism of those books can only be founded upon the internal evidence of those books themselves. There is no other literature in the Hebrew tongue now existing which is not later than the Christian era,—later, I believe, by a century or upwards. And of Jewish

writers in any other language, whose works are not included either in the canonical Scriptures or in the Apocrypha, there are only two as early as the beginning of the Christian Church—Philo of Alexandria, who lived from the time of Tiberius to that of Claudius, and Josephus, who was a witness of and actor in the war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, both of whom wrote in Greek. From their writings it is sufficiently plain that they had the same canonical books (historical and other) of the Old Testament that we have. The Greek tradition of the Septuagint was also complete before the Christian era, having been begun (according to Josephus) under Ptolemy Philadelphus, nearly three hundred years before Christ, when it is said to have proceeded as far as the Pentateuch. It

is impossible now to say at what time each of the later books in this translation was finished, but I do not believe it to be doubted by any critics (even those who are boldest in their speculations) of any weight or authority that the whole body of the books which we call canonical, as we now have them rendered in that version, were in the hands of the Greek-speaking Jews some considerable time before the nativity of our Lord. All the manuscripts of the Hebrew text now extant and also of the Greek are later than the Christian era; and, of course, it must be assumed that some variations of the text have come in (as they do in all other manuscripts) in the course of transcription. But the Jews are known to have been always, from the time of our Lord downwards (and I think there can be no reasonable doubt that they

were before, at least from the times of Ezra and Nehemiah), most careful and jealous, to the point almost of superstition, of the preservation and integrity of the sacred text. The multiplication of copies was great, beyond that of copies of any other books (except those composing the New Testament), and the variations in them are unsubstantial and inconsiderable. There are, no doubt, many places in which the Greek translators would seem, from the way in which they have rendered the sense, to have had before them a text not exactly the same with that of the present Hebrew manuscripts; but none of these variances are of any substantial importance.

I have not myself the advantage of knowing Hebrew; and it is, I think, much to be regretted that so few of our

educated people (even among the clergy) do know it. In what I shall say about it, I found myself, in great part, on what I have heard from those who have studied it, and particularly from your Uncle Edwin¹: and I rely all the more on what I have so heard, because I am myself able, with the moderate amount of Greek scholarship which I possess, to form an opinion of my own as to the value of the destructive criticism when applied to the books of the New Testament, and can therefore judge of the probable value of the same sort of criticism when applied to books still more ancient, and standing more entirely by themselves, in a language which I do not understand.

Now, what I understand about the

¹ The late Rev. Edwin Palmer, D.D., Archdeacon of Oxford.

Hebrew books is, that the language in which they are written varies singularly little, from the earliest to the latest; and, further, that there are instances of phrases and idioms, in some of those which are confessedly the most ancient, which are absent from (what may be called) the middle period, and reappear in that which is, confessedly, the latest. Of this last fact the explanation may very well be (consistently with all that we know of the history of the Hebrew race), that phrases and idioms which were part of the common speech of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia in the times of the patriarchs, when the Israelites first became a separate people, remained in common use at Babylon and in Chaldea generally down to and during the times of the captivity; and so came again into use among the Jews of the

captivity, though they had fallen out of use in the times of the kings before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is, I believe, upon such slender grounds as these that most of the purely philological criticism of the Old Testament rests. Differences of style, for instance, are supposed to exist between the book of Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch; and it has been ascribed by some to one, and by others to another, later period partly on the ground of similarity of style or language. But, as to the differences, I am assured that they are microscopic, and not at all greater than might be accounted for by the time and circumstances of the production of that book itself, if taken as a genuine record of the last words and acts of Moses, perhaps by his successor Joshua; and also, that

there is no greater similarity in Deuteronomy to the style or language of any later books than is consistent with the fixed character, through a succession of ages, of a written language whose whole literature consisted of the sacred books preserved by its priesthood.

XXII

LONDON, 27th March 1881.

It is no part of my object to give you in these letters any summary of the proofs or evidences of the Canon of Scripture, which may be found in such books as those of Jeremiah Jones and Lardner in the last century, and their successors in the present. But I wish to say what my own study of Scripture suggests on some points connected with the authorship and structure of

the Canonical Books, as material to help any one from being perplexed by captious objections on that subject.

We find in the New Testament that our Lord and His apostles refer to Moses and David, etc., as having written and spoken certain laws, prophecies, etc., which are quoted from the books which we now have bearing their names ; and, for my part, I utterly disbelieve in the existence of any real grounds for doubting the authorship which is so accredited. But it by no means follows from this that every part of the books which pass by those names was written by those authors ; nor is it of the smallest importance if the contrary is the case, as in some instances and to a certain extent can easily be shown. No one, for example, has ever supposed that David was the author of

all the Psalms, though they are collected together in a book entitled "The Psalms of David." Some of them were evidently written in the times of later kings, some during and some after the captivity. They were no doubt collected and arranged (probably with reference to their use in the Temple services, and certainly not in any critical or chronological order) after the building of the second Temple. The tradition is very probable that all the Old Testament Scriptures were at that time brought together and re-edited by Ezra, or under his supervision. We do not know the names of the authors of many (perhaps the greater number) of the Psalms; but our belief in them as canonical Scripture is independent of any such knowledge, and depends upon their universal reception, both by the

Jewish and by the Christian Church, and on the seal placed upon them (as on the Old Testament Scriptures generally) by the recognition of our Lord and His apostles. In like manner, we know nothing of the authorship of the books of Kings and Chronicles, though from their contents we may reasonably infer that we have in them true and original historical records kept by contemporary priests and prophets. Of the two books which bear the name of Samuel but little (if any part) can actually have been written by that prophet; from the 25th chapter of the first book to the end of the second the history is later than his death. The title, doubtless, does not mean authorship; it is given to both books, probably because they were reduced at one time into their present

form, beginning with the history of the acts and administration of Samuel. The books of Judges and Ruth bear the names of no authors; they are doubtless a collection of ancient national or tribal records, kept and preserved in the same manner as those in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. The book which bears the name of Joshua does not purport to be written by him. Not only does it close with the record of his death, but refers (chap. x.) to the "Book of Jasher," which (from 2 Sam. i. 18) seems to have been of later date than the death of Saul. With respect, however, to these references they may (not improbably) be instances of (what is very frequent in the historical Scriptures of the Old Testament) notes by editors, transcribers, or commentators later than the original text, which, in the

course of subsequent transcription, became incorporated with the text. It is plain that the 18th verse of 2 Sam. i. must be of this character; as are (among many other places which might be referred to), "As it is said to this day," etc., in Gen. xxii. 14 and xxxii. 32, and 2 Kings xvii. 34-41. In the New Testament there are similar examples. It is most probable that the verse about Cyrenius (Luke ii. 2), in which there is a chronological difficulty, and Acts i. 19 have got into the text in this way; and I cannot myself doubt that the same is the true explanation of the introduction of the word "Jeremy" into Matt. xxvii. 9, where Zechariah and not Jeremiah is the prophet really referred to. It is evident that interpolations of this kind are rather evidence of an antiquity

of the context in which they are found earlier than their own, than proofs that the whole books in which they occur ought to be brought down to the date (be it what it may) of the matter interpolated. With respect to the Pentateuch, the inscription of it with the name of Moses certainly does not mean that every part of it was written by him. The last chapter, which records his death, certainly cannot have been, and all which the four last books (Exodus to Deuteronomy) purport to do is truly to record his words and acts. The history in Genesis, if compiled by him, not only may have been, but from the internal evidence of its component parts, most probably was, compiled from earlier patriarchal records and traditions. But, so far from this being inconsistent with the credit or

authority of the books themselves, it rather adds to it, when we consider that Adam, Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph may have been, and in all probability were, the persons who preserved and recorded those earlier traditions.

THE END

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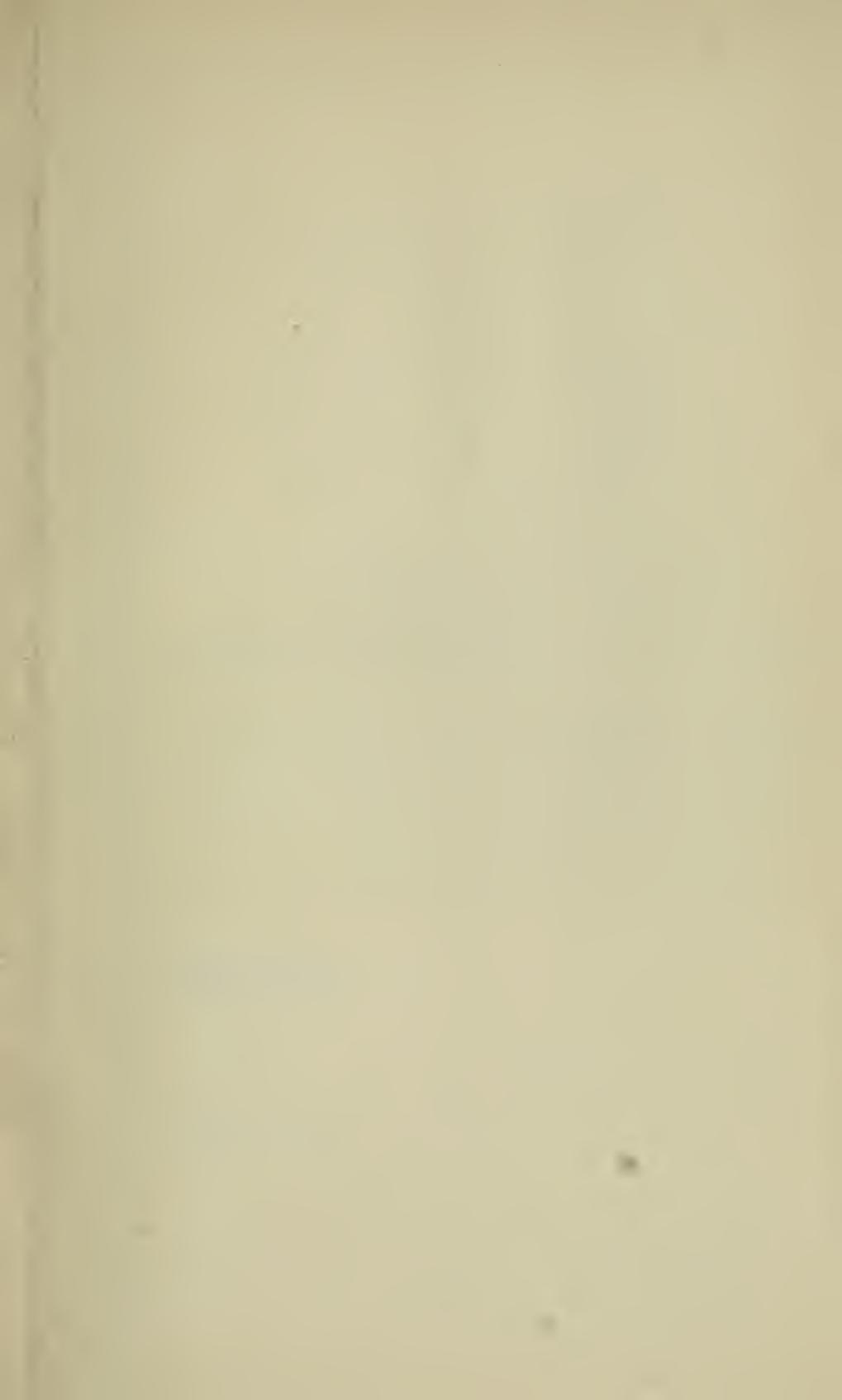
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